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FROM

Col. J. W. Higginson.

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SOME REJECTED VERSE

By
William D. Washburn, Jr.



The Knickerbocker Press
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1902

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Col. Thomas R. Higgins

To
MY WIFE

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NEW ENGLAND.



FIERCE mother of my Kind and Race, thy spare and barren
Sides ooze not with opulence nor do they fill with fatness
The children of thy lean and rocky womb.

Thy milk is not the milk that streams, full flooded
From the breasts of other lands, where Nature serves with brighter
Skies, where fatter glebes bring forth more bounteous stores.

Thine hand maternal is, yet hard and rough, to shape
Thy children into men. The beds thou makest for thy seed
Be harsh and hard, hard tempered be thy sons.

I do love thy rough and craggy hills; the lean and
Sandy fields where Patience, working slow, weaves forth the stern
Unyielding man, that never bends except to break.

And I do crave thy rough, ungentle seas; the great
Breaking floods that roll them far across from Europe's shores
And fall gigantic on thy flint unyielding floors.

I do want this land, birth-place and harsh cradle
Of my Race. I love to wander back to thee from foreign climes,
Soft minded with the dream of templed Art.

Nay, I have stood me by the many-bridged banks
Of Lecherous Seine, sweeping full bosomed, past the Babylonian
Harlot, where she stands, the bawd of nations' lust.

Oft then my truest soul hath sickened, my mind's eye
Cast it back from feast of Light and Art and woman's
Lightsome Shame, and rested full of peace upon thy hills.

Softer spectacles of alien lands, however fair,
Are but voluptuous day-dreams of my sterner soul.
I do love rather, Nature gaunt and hard to bear.

My harsh spirit rises more, when I beat against
The rough surges of my native seas; beneath my feet,
Feel the harsh and rocky soil, unyielding, crash.

New England.

I do love the place, where, stern and resolute,
The people of my blood, firm footed stood when the red-backed
Folk of England marched forth to Lexington.

There fell those farmers well and with their fall
Brought great Future to the multitudinous seed that seethes,
Full nurtured, in the fat realms, rolling Westward.

But eye prophetic I might have, to cast far
Into the purposes of the Fates, now weaving forth
The skein of Nation's life, methinks I could a story tell,

Flaming the very blood of men who slowly
Trace the plow in the black loam of Mississippi mire;
Who fell tall trees on Oregonian slopes;

Whose hands, unwitting, do attend a thousand wheels,
A thousand looms, through the vast continent for which
Our Fathers bought with blood our present blessedness.

I see me this, our own, our Virgin land,
The Arbitrate of Mankind's future Fate; weighted big
With Portent to unborn men of distant hemispheres.

But she to herself be true, hers be the ripest
Of the Cultures that have ripened and rotted to the root
Since man first fought and struggled on this hostile Earth.

God grant that these, the teeming, robust seed of farmer
Loins, do never lose the meaning of harsh hills and fiercer seas
That made their fathers men of Men.

O Fates, do not permit that, battenning on a fat
And lazy soil, they do forget the meaning of their Race,
Loose spare sinews now, in Sloth and present Ease.

May not their strong ancestral mind soft tissue and ill
Nurtured wax—because the vine and fig do spring forth
Bountiful beneath a careless hand.

Oh Thou, who arbitrates the Nations and dost keep
A thousand orbs straight coursing in the realms of Space,
Look kindly on this Seed sown in a frugal soil.

Let it become the Promise that it once held forth.
Let not the souls decay, Paralysis of easy undigested wealth,
Sap the marrow of our father's land.

New England.

Grant Thou, that the robust simple Faith, and the stern
Virtues of a barren land, may yet breed uncontaminate
In this, the great fair Continent
That brooding Fate hath left—the best, last Nursery,
For the choice and final race of Man.

New Haven, Conn.,
June 23, 1901.

THE PRAIRIE.

THY long, clean body of Primaeval flesh;
Unbroken, pure; unsullied by Man's Lust
Of soil space; untouched by the rapacious
Plow, sweet scented, clean washed by Nightly Dews;
Robed daintily in thy maiden dress
Of unviolated Golden Rod and Indian Plumes;
Thy deep bosoms ever gently wooed by
The soft touches of the rain-stained winds—
Thou art the Virgin Maid of Mother Earth.

Thine is not the lot of raped and weary lands,
Which man hath long debauched with his fierce hands.
Thy virtuous depths are still unsoaked
With blood fraternal, spilled by hands of brother men,
Which, lawless since their mother bore them
To the earth, have fiercely spread Despair
And Desolation through the chambers of her
Chaste domain. No wrecked and shattered piles
Of wicked, monumental stone, press them
Heavy on thy buoyant breasts.

Nor, as in thy elder sister lands,
Do swarms of wretched insects of the Earth
Strive with Crime and Avarice and Sweat, to wrest
From the exhausted depths of barren soils
The mere wherewith, to ward away the ever
Present grasp of naked Appetite and Want.
The mindless throngs of fighting men that tramp
Thy sister lands with empty clash of arms;
The brazen bellowing of horns, calling
Men to mutual fellow slaughter—not yet

The Prairie.

Have these, crushed beneath their unmeaning feet
The fair, rich body of thy Maidenhood.

The glory of a thousand creatures
Of Earth Mother, lying in the long swathes
Of the torn, death-smitten piles; the broken
Clutter of swords and guns, the glorious harvest
Of dead; women's sons and husbands, lying
Flat backed and stark, gray faced, with forced, clutched
Hands reached stiffly in the calm air towards
Star sifted Space of the mysterious Night;
The flare of burning towns, the cry of boys
And girls, borne quick to death beneath iron
Hoofs of horses; the wail of women crying
That their houses are bereft; despairing sobs
Of Virgins who shall never know the strong
Embracing of their heart's choice, slain in
The glorious fray—all these, the glories
Of the Man Race have not as yet embossed
In brass or aged stone,—the story
Of thy virgin soil.

Still the Virgin—yet the quick pulses
Of earth Maternity throb deep, continuous,
Through thy fecund limbs; thrilling thy earth breasts
With the agonizing, joyful pangs of thine
Earth Motherhood. Still dost lie, the maiden;
Untouched, unstained; longing for thy sex task
Of Fecundation—Reproduction;
For the giving forth, from thy deep loins,
Of thine Mother gifts of Earth to Man.
The plow, the reaper, not the sword and gun,
Shall be the Husband of thy maiden choice;
Neither dead men cut and slashed in battle,
Shall become the gifts of thy deep womb.

Thine mother garb shall not
Be flecked with the red and roaring cities

The Prairie.

Going up in fire to the unbending skies.
Thine shall be the garb of unpolluted Earth—
The long mysterious swaying billows
Of the wheat, ripening, then yellowing,
For harvest; of the corn, tall-tasselled, green
As Emeralds; then frost touched, orange-yellow.
These long arrays, illimitable, vast;
Stretching from sun to sun-set—these shall clothe
Thy Mother limbs, when thy Virginity
Yields up the Treasure of its Life.

The sun, now dipping to the West,
Casts long level saffron spears upon the crest
Of the Golden Rod and Indian Plume.
The night wind slips gently o'er sad oceans
Of the silent grass. The eerie cry
Of curlews drifts down mysterious, weird;
From the depths of Night slow darkening
Upon the land. Strange wisps of spider's web
Drift soft before the breeze. The wild duck calls
Languorous, mournful to the mate still gone.
The hare pads softly upon the run-way
To its home beneath the Fern.

New York,
January 8, 1902.

TO THE MOUSE.



WITHIN my soul,
The bleak despair of barren lives; the cold hard
Patience of those who wait, with cheerless hope,
The passage of the heavy-footed years,
Treading too slowly towards the welcome
End of all. No hope at all, mere blackness
Of the mind, just waiting to be through with all.
Just waiting, waiting for the night.

Then, thou didst come within the portals
Of my life, trailing the fragrant garments
Of thy gentle womanhood,—soft through
Dusty halls, through chambers dreary of the soul,
Where never yet barred windows had let in
The woman's sunshine.

That day, my House of Life was lighted up,
The dull, dead ache of years was gone. The black
Abyss of coming days, weighted on my soul,
No longer seemed the void interminable
Prisoning me within the hateful bonds
Of restless flesh.

All 's different now, I know not how,
Nor why. I could not say, why on this day
I live, and why, on that, the day before,
I waited only for the end of it.
The day 's the same. The sweet, glad garniture
Of earth has altered not at all.
None 's different in the whole, wide vaulting
Firmament that overspans the world,
Excepting only thee.

To The Mouse.

The waste of it, the loss of it,
To think that thou, through all these wasting years,
Hast trod the self-same earth as I. And that
I knew it not,—and knew thee not till
Only yesterday.

To think of days and weeks that slipped away,
To hated, long-drawn years—and thou upon this earth.
To think of nights of restless hatred of myself,
To think of ashen hearth-stones of the soul,
Ne'er lighted up with kindly human fires.
To think of countless suns that never shone;
Of skies, in spring, that never glowed for me;
Of sweet spring rains that never washed my soul,
And thou—wert ever here.

Minneapolis,
March 28, 1902.

WHEREFORE.



KNOW not whether God or Gods do hold the earth within its constant Spheres; nor know I that again will men fare forth in fields Elysian.

Nor whether yet perchance they quaff the bloody bowls of Norsic mead; nor yet if does the black abyas of Night attach the bed of Death.

I know not, neither, if the deep bowi of woman's Love, drunk to the brim, mean aught but Naught in human Life;

Nor ken I, whether rending pains of child-birth, wrenching Woman's soul, mean more than grosser pangs that smite all common ranks of natural life.

Nor know I that the quavering cry of new-born life, first breaking on the chilled world,

Means aught, but that another thing of flesh and blood springs forth, to meet the slow struggle and oblivious death.

Nor do I know the meaning of the Rose; the deep-orbed Heavens crusted o'er with sparkling eyes of Infinite,

Nor purport of the century-ribbéd rocks that thrust sharp snow sides into the cavernous blue above.

None of these things, nor of their like, do tell me Why nor Wherefore; When nor How the thing began; nor When nor Why nor Where it ends.

To me they are the skirtings of the Mystery, that we, who live on this bare earth shall never know in present life.

Yet know I now, as I do know the child-birth cry, the choke of death, the hundred things that mark the pass of man through this the excremental world;

That all is not for Naught nor do the Reaches of the outer Space gleam forth with lamps to light a passing world—then black Oblivion to a Race.

Wherefore.

Sure Cause, some Why there is, that leads the dull race to rear its head above the lot of common beast.

Nor needs it me, Priest's Band, nor Incense, fouling Nature's breath, to tell that somewhere lies the hidden Cause of all.

Nor does it want the bribe of coming pay, nor the sure spectacle of the future Soul enwrap in mystic Ecstasy, to keep the strong-footed in the path of right.

To the strong Soul, needs nor Book nor Rite nor Heaven thrusting piles of Gothic arch—to tell the Infinite; nor that the weight of Human effort finds some meaning in the end.

Tomorrow sleep we in dank earth, beneath the frost, or floats the worn corse Seaward, prey of wave and fish and tide,

'T is not in vain it bore its shackles stoutly here on earth, nor piled small tribute on the monument of Time.

To leave bare earth the richer, in that man checks one bruised infant's sob; once cheers the cracking heart of widowed grief;

But lightens heavy feet of husbandmen creeping the dull slow life towards the unknown Bourne;

Lays but once, soft hands upon the world's great open wound of human Life,

To souls well nurtured, these, Cause enough, to live with patient calm the long and questioning life.

For naught escapes in Nature, Naught can escape in Death, and if Man live some time again, all 's well;

If not, it matters not, so man the Man play here, the true part take in this, the Tragedy or Farce.

To the full-grown soul can come no after harm, perhaps good; at all events, but sweet Darkness and a tired Resting after all.

Williamstown, Mass.,
June 19, 1901.

THE MAN CREED.

THOU sad-eyed one; thou hollow-cheeked with grief;
The hectic face, the fever-shining eyes,
Are not alone the badge of thy sex shame.
For rather do they stand the mockery,
Of the master sex—which thus runs riot
In instincts of the brute that knows no mind.

Oft when I see thee creeping, shamefaced,
Upon the public highway, thy frail limbs
Tremulous beneath thee, thy maiden grace
All clouded deep, beneath the load of shame;
I marvel that a God hath laid on thee
This double charge of grief; this worse than Death;
This merely living of a life bereft
Of all the gentle, godly things that light
The chaste, pure chambers of a maiden's soul.

Much do I question how the man sex,
That so hath broke thy maiden branch and stem,
Can scoff thee on thy painful broken way.
Many a time 't was never thine selection—
This iron path that iron man has,
Ever mindless, set apart for those
Who sin ofttimes only in the instincts
Of the woman's heart; resting all their Life
And Love upon the broken reed of man's
Affection—a thing that 's often falser
Than the mock oaths of fellow thieves.

If 't is Hell for woman so to trust
Her soul to men; and if 't is shame that she
Hath trusted wrongly where her heart was set,

The Man Creed.

What is the name that shall of right be placed
Upon the stronger one—the Oak about whose
Trunk the fragile Vine hath wrapped its fingers ?
What is the term that juster Gods than those
Which Pharisees now worship at their shrines,
Shall fix on him who tramples maidenhood—
Burning the brand of shame upon the one
Who sins from woman's love, not from the flesh?

I do not know the ways of Gods, who rule
Strangely enough, according to the Cults
That raise rich temples in the name of Christ,
Yet, if the bald term Justice has meaning
Aside from that of Uncaught Pharisee;
Some strange and lawless rule of man life will,
Some after time, be torn to smallest shreds
And tatters of contempt.

Once, universal Justice shall weigh out
The bottom lees and dregs of human life;
Using God scales—not the false and loaded
Weights of men, I think that many a base
And prosperous knave will get the reckoning,
That coward man creeds now cast, full weighted,
All, alone, upon the shrinking shoulders
Of the woman sex—which in its very
Sinning oft sins higher, than is the whole
Seeming virtue of some virtuous men.

New York,
January 6, 1901.

THE GREAT BIG GROWN-UP MAN.



T night when I go up to bed
I never, never fall asleep like boys
That mother reads to me about in books.
I hate to go to bed while sister stays
Downstairs with grown-up folks; and listens to
Them talk about the things that they have done
All day; and so I just won't go to sleep,
But lie awake and think all to myself
Of all the things that I will do when I 'm
A great big grown up man.

First place, I 'll never, never
Send to bed my nice, big, grown-up boys,
I 'll never make them wear their horrid Sunday
Clothes. And I 'll never make them go to school
Or drive them off to church, or to the man
Who pulls the teeth; and I 'll never, never
Spank them with a brush, not even with my
Hand. And there 'll never be a closet in
The house I 'll build when I am grown to be
A great big grown-up man.

When I get big and have
Some children of my own, I 'll have a place
Right near the barn where they can play with sand.
And I will have a great big barn for dogs
And horses and some cats. There 'll be some trees
For little boys to climb; and for my girls,
There 'll be a whole big house for lots of dolls.
There 'll be some rabbits and some doves; also
A place for hoes and little rakes, when I 'm
A great big grown-up man.

The Great Big Grown-Up Man.

When I 'm a man
There 'll be no beds in my new house at all.
There 'll be no tubs of water and no baths.
I won't have brushes; no, nor combs nor soap.
They won't have brushes for their teeth, there won't
Be any clothes but overalls that they
Can tear. There won't be any school at all.
I 'll have the biggest lot of jam and jelly;
Also honey, apples, nuts and piles of cake.
There won't be keys nor doors at all when I 'm
A great big grown-up man.

I often sit and wonder
Why the grown folks always hate to have their
Little children have a good nice time.
I wonder why they hustle them to bed
Just when the lights are lit and downstairs is
So warm and nice. I wonder if that 's sister
Singing down below, and if that 's Daddy
Coming up the stairs. I wonder if there
Is a really, truly, man with sand,
Or if my eyes are getting dark. I wonder
If some day when I grow up, I 'll become
A great—big—grown-up——man.

Minneapolis,
March 29, 1902.

INTROSPECTION.



THOU art the foulest witch of all the Hags
That sap the fair round purposes of Man.
From the brood of moral devils, dost thou,
Most destructive, undermine fair Purpose,
Sap well favored Resolutions; melt
The knees of Energy; hurling into wreck
Inevitable settled Conclusions,
Which, but for thy loathsome Self, had builded
Up to finished and complete Perfection.

Thou dost haunt me in all infernal shapes,
That not warm spreading sunlight nor blackest
Shroud of night may exorcise.

Wake I, full bloomed in health, the mind well clad
For Action, soon dost thou appear at elbow,
Striking paralytic claws in the full
Bosom of all my purpose; twine lean, bony
Fingers close about the generous heart,
Which but for thee had spurred the mind to
Actions notable and ripe with promise.

Don I the clothes of Action, ever do
I hear thy shrill whisper " Why ? "

Do I explain the Why of matters,—
How it will lead to enterprise and the
Upbuilding of great worth, dost thou mutter
" Wherefore ? "

This, to myself explained, again I hear
Thy ever mocking jeer, blacking my mind
With shroudy and cobweb questionings
As to perplexed and abstruse purposes of Fate.

Introspection.

Art generous while the Day holds forth
With brilliance and the teeming spirit takes
Heart in companionship of light and man.
Thou art thy truest self by night, sweeping
Noiseless, down upon the lax and waning
Body of mankind. A vampire then, dost
Feed upon the loosened fibre of the poor,
Unrestful mind. So do I shrink beneath
Vain coverlet and, gasping, wait thy presence.

Beneath thy palsied touch, the fairest
Structures of my waking hours melt to mere
Nothingness and Decay. Strong Purposes,
Goodly, beneath the sun, shrink to a lean
And withered thing. Fair plans and fixéd
Resolutions melt into space. All things
Become intangible. The jaded mind
Quails and staggers beneath a load
Of evanescent questionings, that drive
The reason from its seated throne.

Of, I begrudge the simple, robust man
Whose fat and untilled mind gives thee no place
To plant thy taloned feet.

I think I'd rather dig me in the ditch,
Hack growing trees, eat my three meals daily,
Crawl to my work and then to sleep, than thus
To think and think and think—to erect fair
Purposes, only to see them fall beneath
The very weight of their perfection.

I think I'd rather be the prey
Of every sort of ill and all the forms
Of ingenious death, than to be the thing
That always *is* to be but never is.
That always has its heart stifled with Whys
And Wherefores. Thus goes it slinking to the grave,
While hosts of fat and thoughtless men build up

Introspection.

Templed cities, sleep calm at night, never
A thought disturbing since they left the fecund
Bosom of the unthinking nurse.

And yet again I 'd not be so.
The mental mire sprouting forth gigantic
Upas trees, often gives like footing
To the Violet, the chaste and beauteous
Lily of the Vale. These flowers the fat
And lowly minded never pluck.

I think I 'd rather burn long days in Hell
Than never know the time when Spirit climbs
To Heaven and the chastened mind cleaves
Its way through shining realms of space.

But living once, I think I 'd rather live
Mid the fierce and sickening questionings
Of the sad and restless mind than never
To have lived in Mind at all.

I 'd rather seek the Pole, fall flat-faced
Upon the icy earth, to there lie prone
Till general dissolution thaws the world,
Than never to have seen a Northern Star.

I 'd rather crack my heart with withering pangs
Of hopeless unrequited love, than never
To have known a woman's fullest soul.

While I live, I would live fully, even
With the curse of Introspection close at hand.

I would know the Height, the Depth, the Width,
And Top of Life.

If 't is bitter, I would drain its blackest
Drop. If 't is sweet, I 'd drink to the bottom
Of the cup.

Williamstown, Mass.,
June 20, 1901.

TO MARIAN.



O H, Marian, child;
Of all thy little sex, thou art the sprite
That makes me think the fairy creatures that
I read about in books, are really true.

When I was little and my mother said
That fays and little woodland maids oft came
Out in the night and that they danced light-footed
In the Moon-beams' light, I did not think that
I should ever see a little girl like that.
I did not see how little girls could skip
And dance so lightly that they did not crush
Even the soft smooth cheeks of violets,
Nor press the slight and timorous harebell
Underneath their feet.

I did not see
How they could keep their feet from getting
Very wet when dancing down the moon-lit
Aisles of forest; nor could I see how they
Could keep themselves from catching colds and croups.
I did not see how they could stay out nights
Way after dark; nor why their mothers let
Them go alone to dancing school with elves,
And sprites and all those curious hairy
Things I heard of in the books that mother read.
I never saw how little girls who liked
To eat good cake, ice cream, and custard pie,
Could dance a fairy dance.

Marian makes me think
That, after all, a little girl who laughs
And runs and eats may really be a sprite,

To Marian.

Or fairy, or perhaps a fay. Maybe
You might become a nymph, or something like.
So light your little feet, I do not think
That they would hurt the littlest, littlest
Forest plant or leaf. I truly think that
You could skim so softly over tops of
Harebells and the daffodils that they would
Hardly bend or break. I almost think that
You could lightly tread along the dew-drops
And never even wet your feet.

Who would ever think
That you can run and play with rough, rude boys,
Who scream, and kick, and fight, and cry ?
Who would ever think that you, so dainty
And so slight, can climb a great, big tree ;
Can eat beefsteak, oatmeal, and breakfast food ?
Who would ever think that you could stamp your
Dainty little foot, or loudly cry for jam,
Or ever slap the neighbor's little boy ?
Who 'd ever think that you can talk in French
And German, that you know a little of
Some other hard and horrid foreign tongues ?

To me you are a fairy
Just the very same. I would never like
A little girl that never did a thing
But thread some beads or turn the horrid towel's hem.
I'd rather have a truly little girl
Who likes to have good things to eat and drink,
Who likes to play and scream, than all the little
Evas that I have read of in the books.
If your mother ever wants to sell you,
To loan you for a year or two, or more ;
I know a house where you may come and stay
And do the very things you want to do
As long as you may please.

Minneapolis,
March 29, 1902.

THE DUCHESS.



SEE by the Public Press that
The Duchesse of Burgoyne-Larogassa-
Sparrogras and several other things,
Has come back home again. The papers say
That there were financial and domestic
Difficulties—but I hear, on the side,
That she returned because the Duke 's a low
Down thing; and that, having spent her fortune
On some few women and his gambling debts,
He fell into the quaint and pleasant habit
Of beating her Grace, the Duchesse,
When he was drunk, and cursing her aloud
When he was (sometimes) sober.

Don't know the Duchesse?
She was the sweetest little girl that ever
Crossed the pond, to play the Prostitute
To foreign titles. The Mayflower sort,
The kind that makes the Soul of man expand;
And her heart—it was as pure as sunshine,
Or unmixed gold. Her mother was a fool,
I suppose, because she was made that way.
She never had a heart, because ever
Since her father gave up Retail Trade, she 's
Done nothing else but try to break into
The Society of the Upper Classes.

There she always got the quiet laugh,
Till she got so rich, she accumulated
Parasites by scores. She 's now the ruler

The Duchesse.

Of the six or eight hundred (which is it
Anyhow?). One would think she'd know a thing
Or two—but she does n't. Some years ago
She sold her daughter to the Duke, who has
Now broken her young life and sent her back,
Soul crushed—in the broken widowhood
Of a married woman, only twenty-two.
Ignorant of his character? Oh, no!
Not at all. Mamma knew all about him,
Knew that he was a leprous thing, unfit
To touch the hand of any decent woman.
Some say that her attorney went abroad
And paid his Dukeship's debts before the Duke
Would sign the marriage contract,—and 't is said
He pensioned off some inconvenient people.

What did the Duchesse expect to gain?
Why, just a coronet, just a little
Piece of twisted gold to place about her
Fair young hair—just a lump of metal
Weighing only half a pound; all steeped in
Dishonor, blood, and treachery for some
Two hundred years—since a lewd king placed
The toy upon his mistress' brow.

The Duke? Yes; they knew him, all people did
Who knew just what was what in Paris then.
Young? Some forty-five, or less and old at that,
As well becomes a man who has steeped
In Lechery for a score of years or more.
Quite bald at twenty-five. At forty-five
A thin-shanked, faded, misfit creature,
Absinthy eyes, cracked finger nails, also
A few other slight defects, noticeable
To only strictly medical people:
Those who make good money in the study
Of Decaying Races, devising means to check
The unpleasant ravages of impure blood.

The Duchesse.

Children? God! yes. Died, though, a year ago.
Fortunate too, for it was a scrawny
Little thing. No blood, big piteous eyes.
Might have grown up. Better that it did n't.
Scrofula, tuberculosis or some
Long-fangled thing, that only runs in the
Very best families. The mother loved
It just the same. To see her strive to rouse
Some vigor in that poor and broken frame
Would make man weep—then wonder God permits
Our young womanhood to become the prey
Of titles living in those foreign parts.

To wonder why a woman born of Saxon
Blood will sell her female child in open
Market-place—to become a harlot merely.
Do not know myself. I often wonder
If these women who lead in high Society
Have really hearts, or if they have merely
Some circulatory muscle bunches
Beneath the breasts that are sometimes supposed
To be the God-marks of maternity.
I often wonder honest men permit
These sales of fair young girls to these foreign
Man prostitutes—who, if they lived this side,
Would be breaking stone or be safely hanged
Or filled clean full of lead, as is the way
Among the crude barbarians of the West.

It is none of my business
To meddle in the strictly family affairs
Of the Upper Classes. Rather have my girl
A washerwoman lady, ten children,
Infants always clinging to her arms,
Than one of these imitation female things
That call themselves leaders of Society,
Who sell sweet virginity and our fair
Young womanhood to vice. No better they

The Duchesse.

Than the Arab slavers; those sleek-faced knaves
Whom I have seen in Morocco's market
Selling naked maids to be borne away
By well-fed Moors. To say the least, these treat
Slaves well, according to their Pagan lights.
Not shattering all their lives, not crushing
Their minds to bits, as do the scions of some
Rotted races, that excel now only in
Their crude Brutality and Lust.

If there are to be some fires hereafter,
I have a shrewd idea that there will be
A scorching smell in some localities
That I know of. And when the burning 's over
I think Society will miss a few
Familiar faces of people supposed
To be the thing—just because they wear
A thousand dollar dress, feed some parasites,
Who in their turn lead them to really think
That they are better than common people,
Who, at least, protect their virgin girls.

Chicago,
July 6, 1901.

TO BEATRICE.



WHEN skies are black and Nature scowls
I ever see in thee, the ancient gold
Of Sunlight and glad similitude of Youth.
In thee, I see the world as I did years
Gone by, when every field was very green,
When all the skies were very blue,
When merely breath was joy; when every
Passing summer cloud was castled with
The Pageantry of things which never came.

To me, art thou, my Beatrice, all things
Effeminate and fine that set thy sex
Apart from ours of grosser, unclean clay.
Thou art to me, all things that Womankind
Express fully into the life of man,
Filling his cup brim, to ripe repletion
With their daily wine.

When, gladsome, like pure sunshine, glancing
Over little wrinkled waves, thou smilest on me,
Tender-like yet grave, I think of years far gone,
When one did with me wander through spring paths
With wild flowers, many gemmed. When thoughts
Communal touched with burnished gold
The common things of life.

Alas! 't was years ago. Full a score
Of suns, revolving in their beaten yearly
Track hath orb'd the Heavens since that day.

The crowding ranks of longer years have swept
And torn and riven through the dried and shrunken
Passes of my soul. A host of sordid earthly

To Beatrice.

Things have choked and guttered in my heart.

Thine be, my daughter sweet, the Necromancers
Hand, that often, in fairy tale, doth touch
With wand the hideous work of dwarfs and elves—
And straight spring forth fair things of Gold and Jasper,
Silver and Chalcedony.

'T is not too much to ask of Fate, I think,
That thou, at last of human things, be spared me
Of them all. That thou shalt live till I pass
The few remaining years of natural life.
That I may see thee blossoming as does
The tall fair fall flower that overtops
The lesser plants all clustering at its base.

'T is not a thing of weight to ask, that I
May see thee in thy sweet and gentle pride
Become the woman fully grown and fair of mind.
That I may see thy children of my blood
To cluster at thy knee, from thee to drink
Thy Purity and Grace

'T is not too much to grant that I may see
Thy sons and girls grown to fullest stature,
Filling well their place as may become well
Tried and matured souls, feeling the pulse
Of kindred obligation beating strong
In their inherent blood.

Nor at the last does seem too great a boon,
That when this withered, worn-out frame cowers
Above the kindly hearth, no longer fit
To strive with men and wind and tide, that I
May feel thy cool maternal hand smooth
The sharp wrinkles on my brow.

And when the dark abyss familiar gapes
Beside me, and no longer runs the crisp,
Red blood, all swelling through my veins;

To Beatrice.

And when 't is very cold and dark, and things
Familiar turn themselves to mists and shadows,
From out the closely circling concomitants
Of Death, may then I feel thy hand full close
And warm in mine.

Then will I lie me calmly down,
Full satisfied to drift me on my own
Inevitable Tide which bids its chosen
Time to sweep man forth from the close touch
Of Love and Life and all the earthly things
That make for human Joy.

New York,
June 22, 1901.

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